

BURNS, JACKSON

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SPEECHES

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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

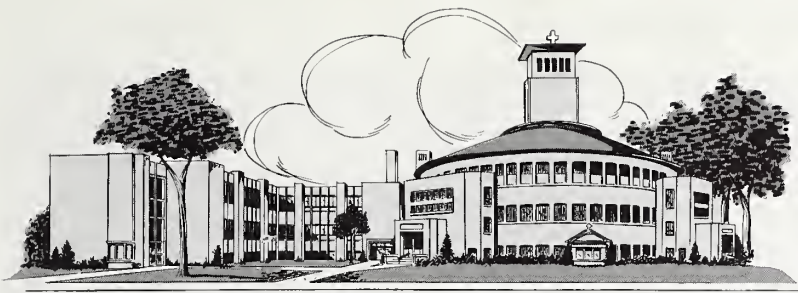
Jackson Burns

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# St. Paul's Outlook

Vol. XXVI

Cedar Rapids, Iowa—Friday, April 23, 1965

No. 17

## Iowa Area Program In Des Moines April 26

"Methodist Quadrennial Day" will be observed by the Iowa Area with a special program in Des Moines April 26. Three significant events will be included: The Quadrennial Program of The Methodist Church for 1964-1968; an outline of past achievements and future goals; and the opening of the new Area Headquarters Building.

Registration will begin at 10:00 A.M. in the Veterans Auditorium. At the 10:30 worship service addresses will be given by Bishop James S. Thomas of the Iowa Area, and Bishop Dwight E. Loder of the Michigan Area.

Following a 12:30 luncheon Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke of the New York Area, and Bishop F. Gerald Ensley of the Ohio-West Area, will speak.

In the early afternoon there will be a procession to the new Area Headquarters building for a service of consecration.

## Dr. Burns To Deliver Lyman Beecher Lectures At Yale Divinity School



Dr. Jackson Burns

Dr. Jackson Burns will deliver the Lyman Beecher Lectures On Preaching at Yale Divinity School next week, April 27 to 29. He is the fifth American Methodist to be chosen for this lectureship in the past twenty-five years. The others were Dr. Ralph Sockman (1941), Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam (1944), Dr. Halford E. Luccock (1953), and Bishop F. Gerald Kennedy (1954).

The theme of Dr. Burns's lectures will be **Preaching To The Divided House**. He will deliver four lectures: "The Word That Divides," "The Field At Anathoth," "The Prophet's Problems And Rewards," and "The Word That Reconciles."

A survey of the Lyman Beecher Lectures up until 1950 has been written by Edgar DeWitt Jones and is entitled **The Royalty Of The Pulpit**. It is in the St. Paul's church library. The lectures are usually published in book form, and Dr. Jones calls these books "the most noted Library on Preaching in the world."

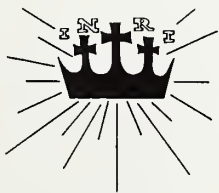
The Lyman Beecher lectureship was established in 1871 by a gift to the Divinity School with the stipulation that the interest from the fund was to be used to finance lectures, from time to time, "by a minister of the Gospel, of any evangelical denomination, who has been markedly successful in the special work of the Christian ministry." Except for two years, in 1894 and 1937, the lectures have been given each year since 1872.

The first Beecher lecturer was Dr. Henry Ward Beecher. Other noted lecturers have been Phillips Brooks, Henry Van Dyke, Washington Gladden, Henry Sloan Coffin, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, George A. Buttrick, Ernest Fremont Tittle, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Leslie Weatherhead.

Dr. and Mrs. Burns will drive to New Haven, leaving today (Friday). Their

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## The Pulpit



Sunday, April 25  
9:30 and 11:00

Sermon by  
Dr. Glenn W. McMichael

**THE WEEKS WHICH  
FOLLOW EASTER ARE  
THE TEST OF EASTER**

## Davenport Choir To Sing At St. Paul's

The Wesley Singers, a 55-voice choir of high school young people from St. John's Methodist Church, Davenport, Iowa, will sing in both the 9:30 and 11:00 o'clock services at St. Paul's Church on Sunday, April 25. They will sing two anthems: "Once To Every Man And Nation" by York, and "Almighty God Of Our Fathers" by James, under the direction of Orville L. Wike, St. John's Director of Music.

At the same time the Chancel youth choir of St. Paul's Church, under the direction of David R. Noble, will be singing at St. John's Church. Sunday afternoon members of the choir will be attending the District Youth Rally where they will sing again at 7:00 P.M.

Dr. Kenneth E. Metcalf, formerly associate minister at St. Paul's Church, is the minister at St. John's Methodist Church.



# Calendar Of Events

## SUNDAY MORNING

- 9:00 Church Lending Library—Room 113  
 9:30 Church School  
 Crib Nursery—Room 214. Toddlers — Room 202. Nursery II—Rooms 201, 203. Nursery I — Rooms 205, 207  
 Kindergarten Extended Session — Room 210. Kindergarten II — Rooms 209, 310. Kindergarten I — Rooms 312, 313  
 First Grade — Rooms 309, 311. Second Grade — Rooms 305, 307. Third Grade—Rooms 301, 303. Fourth Grade—Rooms 109, 110. Fifth Grade — Rooms 105, 107. Sixth Grade — Rooms 103, 101  
 Seventh Grade — Rooms 327, 329  
 Eighth Grade — Rooms 323, 325  
 Compass Club — Youth Center Lounge  
 Kum Double Class — Room 317  
 Family Fellowship Class — Youth Center  
 Friendly Folks and Wesleyan Men—Chapel  
 United Women—Parlor A  
 9:30 Morning Worship  
 11:00 Church School  
 Crib Nursery — Room 214. Toddlers — Room 202. Nursery II — Rooms 201, 203  
 Nursery I — Room 207  
 Kindergarten II — Room 209. Kindergarten I — Room 313. First Grade — Room 311. Second Grade — Room 307. Third Grade — Rooms 301, 303. Fourth Grade —Room 110. Fifth Grade — Room 107  
 Sixth Grade—Room 103  
 Ninth Grade—Room 317  
 Senior Seminar—Youth Center  
 11:00 Morning Worship

## SUNDAY EVENING

There will be no meetings of the MYF groups because of the District Youth Rally in Davenport, Iowa

- 7:45 Young Adult Fellowship—Parlors

## MONDAY

- 9:00 Preschool—Room 210  
 7:00 Boy Scouts—Social Hall  
 7:30 Commission on Membership and Evangelism—Parlor C

## TUESDAY

- 9:00 Preschool—Room 210  
 11:00 "Tasting Smorgasbord" sponsored by Elizabeth and Joanna Circles—Social Hall  
 4:00 Seraph and Cherub Choirs rehearsal  
 7:30 Commission on Missions Open Meeting—with Mrs. John Hickman speaking—Parlors

## WEDNESDAY

- 9:00 Preschool—Room 210  
 4:00 Carol Choir rehearsal—Music Center  
 5:00 Choristers Choir rehearsal—Music Center  
 6:00 Junior High MYF—Room 101-103  
 6:30 Choir Recognition Dinner—Social Hall

## THURSDAY

- 9:00 Preschool—Room 210  
 4:00 Wesley Boys' Choir—Music Center  
 5:00 Boys' Bell Choir—Music Center  
 7:30 A. A.—Room 101

## FRIDAY

- 9:00 Preschool—Room 210  
 4:00 Epworth Bell Choir—Music Center  
 7:00 Seventh Grade Party—Social Hall

## SATURDAY

- 9:30 Senior High Confirmation Class—Room 101  
 10:00 Chancel Bell Choir (Freshmen)  
 11:00 Chancel Bell Choir (Upper Classmen)  
 6:30 N.A.A.C.P. Dinner—Social Hall

## Dinner For Choirs

The annual Choir Recognition Dinner honoring members of the Chancel and Sanctuary Choirs will be held Wednesday, April 28, at 6:30 P.M. in the Social Hall. Husbands or wives of choir members may attend the dinner by purchasing a ticket for \$1.25. Reservations should be in by Sunday, April 25.

## Ball Players Needed!

Even though the Spring has been cold, baseball is in the air. Plans are being made for St. Paul's Church to have a team in the Church League this summer. Anyone who would like to play should call Arthur Roderick, 364-7568 or 365-8411 Ext. 2162. A team manager is also needed. All players must be beyond high school age as this is an adult league.

## Summer Jobs For Students?

Within a few weeks many of our college students of St. Paul's Church will be back in Cedar Rapids for the summer. Many of them will be looking for jobs for income to apply on college expenses. Every year the church has requests from students to help them find jobs. Anyone knowing of summer jobs for students should contact the church so this information can be passed on to students who are looking for them.

## LYMAN BEECHER LECTURES—

(Continued from Page 1)

two older sons, Allen, who is a student at Columbia Law School, and Jonathan, who is a Freshman at Haverford College, will be in New Haven for the first two lectures which will be delivered Tuesday.

After the lectures, Dr. and Mrs. Burns will go to New York City for a few days, returning to Cedar Rapids on May 5.

## Annual Meeting Of Conference W.S.C.S.

The 16th annual meeting of the Woman's Society of Christian Service of the North Iowa Conference will be held at Grace Methodist Church in Webster City, Iowa, on Wednesday, April 28. The Rev. Paul H. Heath of Grace Methodist Church will open the conference with a meditation at 9:30 A.M. Mrs. W. D. Martin, Conference President, will present the theme of the meeting, "Summoned to a New Age." Mrs. Aaron Hutchens of Des Moines, a member of the Board of Missions, and Miss Edith Parks of the Merwa Secondary School in Southern Rhodesia, will address the morning session.

At the afternoon session Bishop James S. Thomas will give an address.

Other items on the program will be a consecration service and an installation of officers service.

Reservations for the luncheon (\$1.25) and arrangements for transportation may be made by calling Mrs. C. C. McIntyre (363-4256) by Sunday, April 26.

## Family Week Devotions

All families of St. Paul's church are invited to participate in use of special daily devotional materials during Family Week, May 2-9. Daily devotions have been written by laymen of St. Paul's Church and printed for distribution.

Copies of the devotional booklets will be available in adult classes, on the literature table and special tables in the rear of the Sanctuary April 25, and May 2. Anyone unable to pick up a copy should call the church office in time for mailing before May 2.

## Circle Training Session

A training session for those who will be giving the May circle program, "A Look At Ourselves As Christian Women," will be conducted by Mrs. Norval C. Eells on Monday, April 26, at 9:30 A.M. in the Library. A nursery will be provided.

ST. PAUL'S METHODIST CHURCH  
 1340 Third Avenue S.E.  
 Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
 RETURN REQUESTED

*Mrs. J.M. Tallman*  
*2608 Beaver Ave S.E.*  
*Cedar Rapids, Iowa*  
*52403*

## **Dr. Burns Chosen For Lecture Series**

Dr. Jackson Burns, senior minister at St. Paul's Methodist church, will deliver four convocation lectures Tuesday and Wednesday at Wesley theological seminary in Washington, D.C.

Convocation lectures are given annually at Wesley, located on the northwest corner of the American university campus, at a time when alumni return.

Recent lecturers have been Dr. Bernhard W. Anderson, dean of Drew theological seminary; Dr. George A. Buttrick, professor at Union theological seminary; Dr. Douglas V. Steere, professor at Haverford college, and Methodist Bishops F. Gerald Ensley and Gerald H. Kennedy.

Dr. Burns' lectures will concern the minister's role as preacher.



AN HUMBLE  
INSTRUMENT  
IN THE  
HAND OF GOD

(A Sermon on Lincoln)

A Sermon Preached by  
Dr. Jackson Burns  
Senior Minister

February 6, 1966

St. Paul's  
Methodist Church

1340 3rd Ave. S.E.  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa



# AN HUMBLE INSTRUMENT IN THE HAND OF GOD

(A Sermon on Lincoln)

by

Jackson Burns

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

Next Saturday we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Sidney Mead once said that Lincoln represents "the spiritual center of American history." Lincoln personifies much that is best in our American tradition. He was a complicated man, a figure of loneliness and sadness, of humor and courage, of compassion and humility. Robert Ingersoll once said of him, "He is the gentlest memory of our world." Perhaps this is overstating the case. At least we can agree that he is the gentlest memory of our national life.

All my life I have been something of a hero worshipper. My greatest hero has been Jesus Christ. High on the list of my other heroes has been Abraham Lincoln. I can still remember in considerable detail the day when I, a high school boy, bought Carl Sandburg's book, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years, and began to read it. I can remember my grandmother telling of how she, as a girl, was taken to see the body of the martyred Lincoln as he lay in his coffin. I can remember going with my mother to visit Lincoln's tomb in Springfield, Illinois, and seeing her stand before that tomb with tears filling her eyes. I can remember hearing my father talk about Lincoln and quote, again and again, Lincoln's favorite poem which begins,

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.

I believe it will be good for us this morning, in this time of tension and danger in American life, to think about Abraham Lincoln. I originally considered speaking on the theme, "If Lincoln Were President Today." I thought I would try to picture how Lincoln would face some of the great issues of our day. I decided not to do this, because I knew I would be tempted to line Lincoln up with my own point of view. Nevertheless, I believe we can learn things from Lincoln which will help us in our time. Edmund Burke once said, "People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors." I want us to look back this morning to "the spiritual center of American history."

I have read recently a fascinating book by William J. Wolf entitled The Religion Of Abraham Lincoln. He pictures some of Lincoln's intellectual struggles as he developed his religious faith. Lincoln was intellectually honest, and he would not subscribe to any creed which he did not understand and whole-heartedly believe. He never joined a church. He once said, "When any church will inscribe over its altar as its sole qualification for membership the Savior's condensed statement of the substance of both the law and Gospel, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,--that church I will join with all my heart and soul."

I wish that Lincoln had found it possible to join a church. I think the church needed him and that he needed the church. But even though he was not a church member he was responsive to the will of God. Soon after he became president he made a speech in Trenton, New Jersey, in which he said that he would be most happy if he could "be an humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty." I believe that he was just that. When I think of Lincoln I often remember the words of the prophet Micah: "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Let us use this text as a pattern for our thought this morning and see how Lincoln exemplifies this conception of goodness.

# I

Consider, in the first place, Lincoln's dedication to justice. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice..."

One of the most fascinating aspects of the development of Lincoln's thought was the way in which he worked out, first in his mind, and then in his deeds, his own understanding of the relationship between order and justice.

Lincoln "believed that slavery was a moral evil. He believed it was against the constitution of the universe. He believed it was a mocking of the God who had created the Negro in his own image as he had all men. He believed that the injustice of slavery invited the wrath of God." (Wolf, p. 102) He said, "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just."

Yet, in 1862, in a letter to Horace Greeley, he voiced his primary dedication to the establishment of order. He said, "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do it."

Yet he could not rest easily in this decision, and he faced his dilemma in great agony of spirit. He wrote to George Robertson, a professor of law at Transylvania college, saying that America's political problem was how it could continue half slave and half free. He said, "The problem is too mighty for me. May God, in his mercy, superintend the solution."

Eventually he came to believe that the only way he could save the Union was to free the slaves. Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out that this development in Lincoln's thought symbolizes the fact that while order precedes justice in the strategy of government, nevertheless that order must be based on justice if peace is to be achieved. An order which is superimposed upon injustice invites the resentment and the rebellion which can destroy it.

This principle applies just as surely today as we face the civil rights struggle as it did in Lincoln's day. We have on the one hand those who place order above justice, who want peace at any price. We have others who are passionately concerned for justice and who will risk the disruption of the social order in the struggle for justice. The problem will only be solved when we learn that the only durable order must be based on justice.



At the outset of the Civil War, Lincoln prepared a message for Congress which is not often quoted. He said that the leading object of government was "to elevate the condition of men" and he pointed out that this involved three things: (1) to lift artificial weights from their shoulders; (2) to clear the paths of laudable pursuits for all; and (3) to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life." This was a statement of Lincoln's political creed. It could well serve as a guide for us today.

## II

Consider, in the second place, Lincoln's dedication to mercy: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy..." It has been said of Lincoln that it was sometimes difficult for him to do justice, so dearly did he love mercy.

There is a chapter in Carl Sandburg's great biography of Lincoln which is entitled, "The Pardoner." It gives numerous instances of how, in spite of the protests of his generals, Lincoln pardoned soldiers who had been sentenced to death.

A sobbing father came to him one day to say that he had a son with Butler's army who had been sentenced by court-martial to be shot. The president read to the man a telegram from General Butler urging him not to interfere with army discipline. The dazed father shook with desperate grief. Lincoln watched him a minute and said, "By jings, Butler or no Butler, here goes." He wrote out an order saying that the man's son was not to be shot until further orders from him. The man was still in grief. He said, "But you may order him shot next week." Lincoln smiled and said, "I see you are not very well acquainted with me. If your son never looks on death till further orders come from me to shoot him, he will live to be a great deal older than Methusaleh."

Lincoln's love of mercy was shown in his attitude toward his enemies. One day he dropped a few kind words about the Southern soldiers. He pointed out that they were human beings and that one could not be completely remorseless, even in war. An elderly woman overheard him and berated him. She said that instead of speaking kindly about his enemies he should be planning to destroy them. To which Lincoln replied, "What, Madam, do I not destroy them when I make them my friends?"

In a letter to his friend Joshua Speed, Lincoln said, "I have never knowingly planted a thorn in any human heart, but I have always endeavored to pluck a thorn and plant a flower wherever a flower would grow."

Lincoln's love of mercy was demonstrated in sublime form in the closing words of his second inaugural address:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphans, and to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

III

Consider, in the third place, the humility of Lincoln. "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Lincoln walked humbly with God and he tried to influence this nation to walk humbly with God.

There is a chapter in Sandburg's biography of Lincoln which puzzled me when I first came to it. It is entitled, "Lincoln's Laughter--His Religion." I could not quite understand why Sandburg would link laughter and religion together. But William Wolf says that Lincoln's laughter was the threshold to his religious faith. Lincoln could laugh at himself. This is one form of humility.

Sandburg tells about two women who belonged to the Society of Friends. They did not quite understand or appreciate Lincoln's humor. One day they were talking about Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln. One said, "I think Jefferson will succeed." "Why does Thee think so?" asked the other. "Because Jefferson is a praying man," was the reply. "And so is Abraham a praying man," said the other. "Yes," said the first woman, "but the Lord will think Abraham was joking."

Sandburg reports that Lincoln heard this story and considered it one of the best stories about himself that he had heard.

Lincoln was a praying man, and I think we are safe in assuming that when he prayed the Lord did not think he was joking. Indeed, Lincoln showed much more insight into the proper role of prayer in wartime than did many more orthodox persons.

One day a group of clergymen visited Lincoln and one of them said something to the effect that he hoped "the Lord was on our side." Lincoln startled his visitors by saying bluntly, "I don't agree with you." Then he explained, "I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of right. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side."

Among Lincoln's papers after his death was found a meditation he had written on the prevailing of God's will. It is believed to have been written in September, 1862. He had written, "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party..."

This idea was included in Lincoln's Second Inaugural address. He pointed out that both parties to the conflict read the same Bible and prayed to the same God. He said, "The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes."

I have tried to imagine what Lincoln's attitude would be toward the war in Vietnam if he were living today. Would he be a hawk or a dove? Would he favor all-out war in Vietnam, insisting that there is no substitute for victory? Or would he counsel patience and restraint and tirelessly seek a way to peace?

I have my own opinion about this, but I know it is only an opinion, and it may



be that my own convictions in this matter have unduly influenced my interpretation of Lincoln, so I will say no more on this point.

I am sure, however, of this. Whatever his point of view, Lincoln would call upon us to walk humbly with God--to beware of national pride.

In William Wolf's book he tells how in 1863 at the suggestion of Senator Harlan of Iowa, Congress called upon the President to set apart a day of national prayer and humiliation. It is good to know that an Iowa Senator once made such a suggestion. Lincoln acted upon the suggestion and named April 30, 1863 as a National Fast Day. He called for personal and national repentance. This is what he said:

"...it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord...

"And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?...

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!"

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Let us pray that we as individuals and as a nation may learn how to walk humbly before God.





